

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What is the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)?

The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) will be an adopted Chapter of the Raleigh City Code of Ordinances and utilized for regulating allowable land uses, development, and public infrastructure for properties located within the City of Raleigh's Corporate Limits and its Extra Territorial Zoning Jurisdiction (ETJ). The UDO will combine the City's Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations into a simplified, user-friendly document. The process of adopting a new UDO involves reorganizing the current regulations and proposing new regulations or development and redevelopment for all public and private property such as allowable land uses, minimum building setbacks, maximum building height, required landscaping, street and sidewalk widths, greenways, water and sewer lines, and specific topics like historic and downtown overlay districts.

All project information and materials will be posted to the Department of City Planning website. The web page for the Department of City Planning, the lead agency for the update, is www.raleighnc.gov/planning.

Why are we updating the City's Planning and Development Regulations?

Planning and development regulations should be regularly reviewed and updated due to such things as new development trends and new environmental legislation. Although the City's Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations have been continually updated in an effort to stay modern, numerous sections of the Zoning Code still represent the development regulations put in place 50 years ago (i.e. parking requirements, minimum setbacks, maximum building height). Many of the current standards have become dated and hundreds of individual Code updates throughout the years have resulted in an overly complicated set of regulations.

Additionally, the City has recently adopted the new 2030 Comprehensive Plan, which became effective on November 1, 2009. The Comprehensive Plan contains more than 120 Action Items recommending changes to the City's Planning and Development Regulations to implement the Plan's growth policies. The current regulations too often result in development patterns contrary to Plan goals, while requiring a difficult and protracted process in order to gain approval to develop in accordance with the Plan. A significant revision to the City's Planning and Development Regulations is necessary for future development to reflect the goals, visions and recommendations of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

Who is preparing the Unified Development Ordinance?

The Department of City Planning is the lead agency overseeing the drafting of the UDO. A working group of key City departments—including Inspections, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Community Development, and others—will be providing input, background data, and oversight. The UDO Advisory Committee comprised of 11 citizens appointed by the City Council, the Planning Commission, and City Council will convene for work sessions on the UDO proposal at key points of the process, and will participate in the refining of the UDO during the adoption process. A multi-disciplinary consulting team, led by Code Studio, Inc. (www.Code-Studio.com) and including experts in land use, zoning, transportation, neighborhood preservation, and environmental planning is assisting the City with the effort. Most importantly, citizens and stakeholders throughout the City will play a key role developing the content and direction of the UDO.

What is involved in adopting new Planning and Development Regulations?

A successful UDO must be clearly organized, easily understood, and reflective of the goals of the community. As a first step in gaining community input, during the third week of October 2009, the City held three public “listening sessions” and sixteen stakeholder discussions to solicit ideas, public opinions, and professional input. The stakeholder groups included such topics as Affordable Housing, Schools and Hospitals, Raleigh Citizens Advisory Council, City Boards and Commissions, Stormwater Management, Environment, Building and Architecture, Transportation, Parks and Recreation, and Economic Development. In subsequent steps, planners will gather and analyze such things as recent and past development trends within the City of Raleigh (such as shifts in housing choices and parking analysis), the development regulations of similarly-sized cities with common population dynamics, North Carolina state laws governing local development, and successful residential and commercial developments found throughout the United States. The background information and public input will be used to inform a lengthy problem-solving process. Issues are identified, and then the issues are studied and solutions offered to the general public, the UDO Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission, and the City Council for their review and consideration.

Will the UDO be a Form-Based Code?

Although the new code will place a stronger emphasis on form than the current code, it will not be a pure form-based code. A form-based code is a means of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form with a lesser focus on land use. Form-based codes require the preparation of a detailed regulating plan prior to code development, making them more suitable for small areas. In accordance with the project scope, the UDO is to be a conventional code with form-based elements and overlays, an approach sometimes referred to as a hybrid code. The City of Raleigh’s intent is to produce regulations that address contemporary development and zoning practices with appropriate design criteria that will provide opportunities for innovative and creative approaches to development.

What are some key issues for the Unified Development Ordinance?

While the issues that the UDO will address will continue to evolve as a result of citizen and stakeholder input, the Department of City Planning has identified a preliminary set of key issues. They include:

- Creating regulations that provide a means of implementing the goals and policies of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan;
- Creating regulations that address market trends, incorporate best practices, and address contextual issues throughout the City;
- Removing or amending outdated standards;
- Consolidating uses or user groups;
- Establishing clear definitions and terminology;
- Providing graphics and illustrations to supplement written regulations; and
- Crafting regulations that provide for effective enforcement capacity.

What is the public process for updating Raleigh’s Planning and Development Regulations?

In addition to the three “listening sessions” and sixteen stakeholder discussions held in October 2009, the consultants will provide a diagnostic report of the City’s existing development regulations in light of North Carolina and national best planning practices, a review of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the preparation of the new UDO, and an approach report recommending direction of the project, all for the public’s review. Following the completion of the report and after receiving public feedback (February and March 2010), the drafting of the UDO will begin. A draft for public review is anticipated to be complete in December 2010, followed by a public review and input period of approximately 2 months. Based on comments received, City staff and consultants will refine the UDO in preparation for a March 2011 public hearing. Following the public hearing, additional public input may be submitted to City staff during the Planning Commission and City Council’s review of the draft UDO with final action by the City Council anticipated in June 2011.

How can the public stay informed?

The best way to stay informed is to visit the project website at www.NewRaleighCode.com (www.newraleighcode.com). The Raleigh Department of City Planning will be posting meeting notices and documents on this web page throughout the process.